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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

Saturday, December 3, 1938

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

SUBJECT: "PEANUTS BY THE BILLION POUNDS." Information from the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, the Bureau of Plant Industry, and the Office of Experiment Stations, U.S.D.A.

--ooOoo--

Peanuts by the peck? Pooh! It's peanuts by the billion pounds this year. While crops of many tree nuts are smaller than usual, Uncle Sam's peanut crop is making a record in size. To aid peanut-growers in making the most of this tremendous crop, the Agricultural Adjustment Administration has arranged a diversion plan as it did last year, authorizing cooperative associations in different regions to pay producers by the ton for specified grades of peanuts. Most of the farmers' stock nuts so diverted will be crushed for peanut oil which is used in vegetable shortenings or cooking fats, in oleomargarine, and in salad oil.

But an even more important use of peanuts than peanut oil is peanut butter. You may be interested to know that peanut butter was first developed as a sanitarium food. Sick people who needed a very nourishing food to build them up were the first to eat peanut butter. That was back in 1890, some time before children (or their mothers) had discovered how good peanut butter sandwiches are for school lunches and picnics. Some 400 million pounds of farmers' stock peanuts now go into peanut butter every year. Lately there has been a movement afoot to use only better grade peanuts for butter.

By the way, did you know that it's easy to make peanut butter at home? Home-made peanut butter costs less than the butter you buy and is especially delicious. All you have to do is to roast the raw peanuts in your oven, salt them and grind them with the finest plate on your meat-grinder. For that matter, you can buy them already roasted. Then all you have to do is to salt and grind them. If the peanuts are roasted whole, remove the shells and the red skin that covers each kernel. Run the nuts through the grinder. If they aren't fine enough to make a smooth spread, run them through again. A convenient time to add salt is between the two grindings.

Of course, you know that peanut butter is delicious not only for sandwiches but also in cream soup, omelet, scalloped vegetables, baking powder biscuits, cookies, cakes, cake frosting, even candy. To make peanut-butter biscuits, just use peanut butter instead of the fat called for in your regular recipe. The same for your recipe for plain drop cookies. To make peanut-butter cup cakes, use your standard recipe for plain butter cake, but use butter and peanut butter in equal amounts--half and half, that is.

But there. When I start wandering off into recipes, I'm wandering too far from my subject which is this year's peanut crop. Part of this crop will go to

make the popular salted peanuts on sale all over the country. Sometimes you'll find stores selling peanuts under the name of "jumbo salted." These are Virginia peanuts usually salted after their red skins are removed. But sometimes these Virginias are salted with the skins on. They are called "Redskins." Spanish peanuts are usually salted with the skins attached. But runner peanuts are never salted at all.

A good many peanuts also go into the popular candy bars, but perhaps not so many as once did. Today peanut candy bars have considerable competition from bars made with chocolate, malted milk, marshmallow, coconut and egg white. Apparently fashions in candy bars change just as fashions in clothes do. Styles change even in peanuts themselves. At least the figures show that whereas today we prefer our peanuts shelled, 15 years ago we bought them mostly unshelled. Remember when you bought peanuts as a child to take to the circus or the zoo? You always bought them in their shells and carried them around in a paper bag. Maybe we've grown lazy, too lazy to shell our own peanuts in the last 15 years. Anyway nowadays we're buying 10 times as many shelled as unshelled peanuts by weight.

Perhaps you've been wondering what happens to the part of the peanut that's left over after the peanut oil is crushed out. That left-over or residue is called peanut meal and is sold mostly for stock feed. It contains a good deal of nourishment, considerable protein, vitamin B, iron and some fat. It's an even better animal food than cottonseed meal. Anybody from the South knows that peanuts and peanut meal make good food for animals--hogs, at least, for peanut-fed hogs have for years made hams that were the pride of the South. And during the past 2 years about 300 thousand acres of peanuts were planted in the South just for "hogging off," as the farmers say. More recently the Alabama Experiment Station found that peanut meal was an excellent food for chickens, too.

But why let the pigs, cows and chickens have all the benefit from such a cheap and nourishing food? That's what Leah Ascham, food and nutrition worker at the Georgia Experiment Station wants to know. She says a lot of people, in the South especially, need the very nourishment that peanut-meal would provide. Peanut meal contains the vitamin that prevents pellagra which many undernourished people have suffered from, especially in the South. What's more, peanut meal also contains considerable protein and iron. Those food values are also important among people who are likely to eat too little lean meat, eggs or fish.

Miss Ascham says peanut meal made from clean unshelled nuts is an excellent as well as a very cheap food for human beings. And she says it makes delicious biscuits, muffins, griddle cakes, waffles, cookies, cakes, pies, puddings, meat and vegetable dishes. But so far manufacturers haven't prepared clean peanut meal for human use because there has been no demand for it. Housewives don't realize yet what a valuable food they are overlooking.

I guess the moral of my peanut story today is that peanuts and peanut butter and peanut meal all are valuable and adaptable foods. They'll make many different dishes and fit in almost anywhere in the meal literally "from soup to nuts."

